***History Notes: Political Parties of Early America***

ABC-CLIO American History Database (12-17-09):

*Development of Political Parties Overview*: The framers of the U.S. [Constitution](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=) made no provision for political parties. Indeed, many believed political parties, or factions, were a source of corruption and an impediment to the freedom of people to judge issues on their own merits. Hoping to avoid the divisiveness of partisan groups, the United States' first president, [George Washington](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=), made a conscious effort to accommodate diverse political philosophies and policies in his choice of Cabinet secretaries.   
  
However, as it turned out, Washington's Cabinet fostered the very divisiveness he sought to prevent. His secretary of the treasury, [Alexander Hamilton](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=), favored a strong central government and soon became the leader of the Federalists, who eventually formed the [Federalist Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=). On the other hand, Secretary of State [Thomas Jefferson](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=) believed that the individual states should have more power and wanted all citizens to be given a voice in government. Jefferson aligned himself with others who believed in the supremacy of the states, including some [Antifederalists](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=), to create the [Democratic-Republican Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=). Despite his best efforts, before Washington's second term expired, party lines were drawn.   
**1796 Election**   
The rival candidates for the 1796 presidential election included two Federalists, Vice President [John Adams](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=) and former diplomatic representative to Great Britain [Thomas Pinckney](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=), and two Democratic-Republicans, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and [Aaron Burr](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=), a leader of a [political machine](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=) in New York City called the Tammany Society. The final electoral vote count was Adams, 71; Jefferson, 68; Pinckney, 59; and Burr, 30. According to the provisions of the Constitution, Adams thus became president, and Jefferson became vice president. The 1796 election stands as the only time in U.S. history when the nation had a president from one party and a vice president from a different political party. (The [Twelfth Amendment](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=) to the Constitution, ratified in 1804, called for electors to specify their votes for president and vice president in order to avoid such situations in the future.)   
**Federalists**   
The Federalist Party had its roots in the work of various groups that advocated the drafting and ratification of the federal Constitution at the end of the [American Revolution](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=). Early leaders in the movement included Hamilton, [John Jay](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=), and [Gouverneur Morris](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=). After 1781, the informally organized Federalists began to advocate for a stronger national government, a treasury that would play a vital role in the nation's economic life, and a pro-British foreign policy. The Federalists were primarily supported by merchants, manufacturers, and residents of urban New England.   
**Democratic-Republicans**   
Many disagreed with the actions of the Federalists and determined that the best way to remove them from power was to form an opposing party. Led by Secretary of State Jefferson and fellow Virginian [James Madison](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=), they organized the Democratic-Republican Party. The Democratic-Republicans advocated a limited federal government, little government interference in economic affairs, and a pro-French foreign policy. The Democratic-Republicans' power base was among small farmers, producers, traders, and southern [plantation](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=) owners. The party's major strength was in the rural and frontier areas.   
**A Dominant Force**   
By 1789, the Federalists had become a dominant force in the national government. Led by Hamilton, they settled the problems of the debts resulting from the revolution, achieved stronger relations with Great Britain by way of the [Jay Treaty (1794)](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=), and attempted to silence their domestic critics with the [Alien and Sedition Acts](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Eras/Display.aspx?categoryid=41&entryid=1183571&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&filterid=) of 1798.   
**It Was Inevitable**   
  
Perhaps the formation of parties was inevitable. For example, while the framers of the Constitution provided for a division of legislative powers between the federal government and the state governments, it was impossible to anticipate every eventuality and specify the extent of the federal government's role as opposed to the extent of the individual states' roles. So, as differences of opinion arose, like minds grouped together to support a cause, and political parties began to thrive.   
  
Today, we continue to debate how the Constitution should be interpreted, and political parties continue to take different sides in the debate.

*First and Second Political Party Systems*: It is easy to take the current American two-party political system for granted. Republicans and Democrats have routinely battled for political office between themselves since the 1850s. In the first 70 years or so after the founding of the United States, however, two other party systems developed for distinct reasons. The first party system of Federalists and Republicans lasted relatively briefly, as did the second party system of Democrats and Whigs. Understanding these party systems demonstrates how political opposition developed in the American republic and reveals the growth of **political parties** as a legitimate force in American government.   
  
The founders of the American political system embraced a common 18th-century idea, the distrust of political parties. Some founders, like [Alexander Hamilton](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), saw political parties as evil and believed they should be abolished or suppressed. Others, like [James Madison](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), also thought political parties were evil but unavoidable in a free society. Instead of suppressing political parties, Madison and others like him wanted only to check their powers. Indeed, Madison conceived of the two houses of [Congress](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) as proper checks on political difference. Virtually none of the founding generation believed political parties were a positive force in the governing of a nation.   
  
Paradoxically and despite virtual unanimity, the first party system emerged in the years just following the ratification of the [Constitution](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all). Those who had supported the Constitution during the ratification were known as Federalists. With the successful ratification of the Constitution and the election of [George Washington](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) as the first president, the [Federalist Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) ascended to the leadership of the young country. However, the Federalists did not think of themselves as a political party; rather, they believed they represented the only legitimate government. Thus, without political parties, there was no organized opposition.   
  
In the first administration, disagreement between Cabinet officials, namely Secretary of State [Thomas Jefferson](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) and Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton, threatened the unanimity the Federalists hoped to maintain. Hamilton, a fervent Federalist, argued for a powerful national government. He advocated such measures as levying protective tariffs, funding a national debt, and chartering a national bank of the United States, all of which would strengthen the national government. On the contrary, Jefferson favored a smaller role for the national government.   
  
Foreign policy issues also separated the Federalists from a growing number who opposed them. In 1793, France, which was embroiled in its own republican revolution, waged war against Britain and Spain. Washington, Hamilton, and the Federalists favored the British. Alternatively, a number of Americans had formed Democratic-Republican societies that favored the French. Those Democratic-Republican societies were grassroots political organizations that thought republicanism and democracy were the same thing, whereas most leaders equated democracy with mob rule or anarchy. The societies saw the French Revolution as a great advancement for democracy and favored France in its struggle with Britain. Consequently, they attacked Washington's failure to help France and identified Hamilton's economic policies as favoring the wealthy at the majority's expense. Democratic-Republican societies supported Jefferson, who in 1793 resigned from Washington's Cabinet.   
  
With the core members of the Democratic-Republican societies, Jefferson began to organize an opposition party to the Federalists. It came to be called the [Democratic-Republican Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), sometimes known as simply Republicans or Jeffersonian Republicans. Democratic-Republicans formed not only to oppose Federalists and Hamilton's policies but also to ensure that principles of a decentralized national government and an economy dominated by small farmers had articulate and powerful support. Their support was greatest in the South and West.   
  
President Washington declined to run for a third term. In his "Farewell Address," he denounced partisanship, even though he had postponed his retirement announcement so the Democratic-Republican opposition had time to organize. Washington worried, in particular, about sectional parties that pitted one region of the country against another. Despite Washington's call for disinterested and independent leadership, the election of 1796 became the first partisan election. Each party involved chose its candidate through a [party caucus](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), a meeting among the party leaders. [John Adams](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), the Federalist candidate, narrowly defeated Jefferson, who ran for the Democratic-Republican Party, 71 electoral votes to 68.   
  
The Federalist administration of Adams began in disarray and faced numerous crises that ultimately weakened the Federalists and strengthened the Democratic-Republicans. Troubled relations with France, including the [XYZ Affair](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) and the [Quasi-War](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), exacerbated the partisan divide between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans. Federalists used the war scare with France as the rationale for passing the [Alien and Sedition Acts](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) of 1798, which seemed to Democratic-Republicans as a dangerous use of government power and repressive action against dissenters. Jefferson and Madison wrote the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions challenging the constitutionality of the Alien and Sedition Acts and articulated a [states' rights](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) argument. Meanwhile, the Federalists fractured in disagreement over foreign policy. Democratic-Republicans used the Federalists' disorder to strengthen their political power.   
  
In the [election of 1800](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), Jefferson defeated Adams. It marked the first time that power was transferred from one party to another peaceably. Although the Federalists still existed and held some political offices, the party was too weak ever to regain the presidency. A succession of Virginians, often called the "[Virginia dynasty](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all)," assumed the presidency from 1800 to 1824 (Jefferson, 1800-1808; Madison, 1808-1816; [James Monroe](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), 1816-1824) and embodied the ideals of the Democratic-Republicans.   
  
The [War of 1812](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) permanently eliminated the Federalists. Federalists who had remained active in political affairs became enraged by the war, which was, in their view, perpetrated against the British by southerners who had dominated the national government in the Democratic-Republican Party. A small group of New England Federalists prepared to secede from the United States. When the United States ultimately defeated the British, nationalist and patriotic feelings gripped the country. The [secession](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all)-minded Federalists seemed treasonous and parochial in their allegiance to regional issues over national ones. As a political force, the Federalists were dead, and a so-called Era of Good Feelings with minimal partisanship occurred during President Monroe's administration from 1816 to 1824.   
  
The second party system developed under different circumstances and during a time of great change. While Monroe and the Democratic-Republicans enjoyed virtually a one-party system, some political operatives began to form a different party system. Those changes occurred at the same time as a vast transformation in voting laws. The right to vote was extended to a much larger population as many states eliminated the property requirement that had prohibited many people from voting in the past. Besides broadening the electorate to include virtually all white men by 1824, states allowed the popular election of presidential electors. In 1800, only two states ([Rhode Island](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) and [Virginia](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all)) had allowed voters to choose the presidential electors in a popular vote. In the others, the state legislatures determined who would be electors. That practice meant the gentry dominated politics. Revision in state laws by 1824 allowed voters in most states to choose the presidential electors; by 1832, only [South Carolina](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) did not permit a popular vote.   
  
The [election of 1824](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) furnished the impetus for the beginning of the second party system. Four candidates vied for the presidency, and all were nominally members of the Democratic-Republican Party: [John Quincy Adams](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), [Henry Clay](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), [William Crawford](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), and [Andrew Jackson](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all). That situation, where four candidates from the same party struggled for the same office, demonstrated the inadequacy of party caucuses to determine a presidential candidate. Furthermore, it showed the difficult circumstances of a single-party system.   
  
With the vote split four ways and no candidate receiving a majority, the election went to the [House of Representatives](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) to decide. Although Jackson had received 43% of the popular vote, Adams won the election after Clay pledged his support and turned his votes over to Adams, who had only received 31% of the popular vote. (Crawford had suffered a debilitating stroke and no longer was a viable candidate.) When Adams made Clay his secretary of state, Jackson supporters charged a "corrupt bargain" had occurred, illegitimately putting Adams in the White House and Clay in the Cabinet. Jackson supporters immediately prepared for the next election.   
  
Jackson supporters, known as Jacksonian Democrats, mobilized to defeat President Adams. They organized the [Democratic Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all). The second party system, then, formed to contest the presidency rather than local elective offices. [Martin Van Buren](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) of [New York](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) became a central figure in the rise of the Democratic Party. He built the Albany Regency, a state political organization that worked hard for the party and placed party loyalty above personal political ambitions. That new tactic of subordinating personal interest to party interests was a leading characteristic of the second party system. Another key feature of the new party system was that political leaders at the local levels, like Van Buren, were instrumental in building the parties.   
  
Van Buren represented a new position as an individual who made one's business politics. Such political leaders as Van Buren organized national campaigns using new techniques of mass mobilization. They published party [newspapers](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), held rallies, and passed out buttons and other party paraphernalia. The changing election laws encouraged this type of direct contact between voters and party officials, as a popular vote determined the presidential electors rather than a party caucus of only select party leaders.   
  
Van Buren and other professional politicians like him succeeded in stimulating Democratic Party organizations throughout most of the states for the 1828 election. Still, the party system was highly unbalanced, with Democrats dominating only in the West and South. By 1832, the parties were roughly balanced in local and national elections in New England and the middle states, but the West and South still were predominantly loyal to the Democrats. A new phase began in Jackson's second term when Van Buren became the Democrats' heir apparent for the 1836 election. Since Van Buren did not possess the strong popular support in the South and West like Jackson with his western and southern roots and exploits, those regions split more evenly between the two parties. The second party system, then, became intensely competitive throughout the country by 1840.   
  
The [Whig Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) had developed to oppose Jackson and the Democrats in 1834. Three congressional leaders—Clay, [Daniel Webster](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all), and [John C. Calhoun](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all)—disliked President Jackson's policies and his manner of wielding executive power. They accused Jackson of defying the constitutional [checks and balances](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) that the nation's founders had created. Whigs also drew some of their members from the [Anti-Mason Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all). Although the Whig Party put forth a serious challenge to the presidency in 1836, it was not until 1840 that they effectively mobilized their members to take control of Congress and the presidency.   
  
From 1840 to the late 1850s, the Democrats and Whigs were closely competitive. The second party system had reached maturity. Democrats' greatest strength came from the South and West and from subsistence farmers, unskilled workers, and Catholic immigrants. The Whigs drew most of their support from New England and the Upper Midwest and from manufacturers, commercial farmers, skilled workers, and northern evangelicals. Ideologically, Democrats favored a limited role for the federal government in economic affairs and social issues, while they supported territorial expansion. By contrast, the Whigs favored government support for such economic measures as internal improvements, wanted the federal government to place controls over such moral issues as [slavery](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) and temperance, and opposed territorial expansion. In the five elections in which Democrats and Whigs contended for the presidency, Democrats won in 1836 (Van Buren), 1844 ([James K. Polk](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all)), and 1852 ([Franklin Pierce](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all)); Whigs won in 1840 ([William Henry Harrison](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all)) and 1848 ([Zachary Taylor](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all)).   
  
In 1854, the [Republican Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) formed from a coalition of antislavery Whigs and Democrats who disagreed with the policy President Pierce was pursuing. An overriding concern about slavery united Republicans with their desire to rid the country of the divisive issue. With the election of 1856, the Republicans nominated [John C. Frémont](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=27&entryid=263216&searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all) as their candidate, and the Whigs no longer were united enough to support a national candidate. The second party system had ended. The third party system of Democrats and Republicans ascended and is still the system in place today.   
  
The first and second party systems were important achievements. The development of the first party system rejected the conventional interpretation that political parties were detrimental to government. Indeed, the first party system established the tradition of legitimate opposition and provided for the peaceful transfer of power that was unique in modern history. The rise of the Democrats and the second party system inaugurated key aspects of the modern political party organization, including the professional politician and mass mobilization of voters. It should be remembered that the Constitution did not provide for the political parties that are now so crucial in the system of government in the United States. The first and second party system did much to pioneer the effective functioning of American democracy.

*Federalist Party:* The Federalists formed one of the first two **political parties** in the United States after the country secured its independence from Great Britain. Born out of the movement to ratify the [Constitution](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) of 1787, the Federalists supported a "federal" system of state governments guided by a strong national government in matters of national policy.   
  
Under the leadership of [George Washington](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) and the intellectual guidance of [Alexander Hamilton](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all), the Federalists envisioned policies that would promote a thriving union based on a mixed economy of agriculture and manufacturing, a strong central banking system, opposition to widespread suffrage, and alliance with Britain—all to be directed by a strong national government. Along with the [Democratic-Republicans](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all), the Federalists, albeit grudgingly, participated in laying the foundation of the two-party political system.   
  
The Federalist Party was formed during Washington's first administration in the heat of conflict over Hamilton's proposals to salvage the finances of the new republic. While many Federalists had been supporters of the Constitution, such notable statesmen as [James Madison](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) and [Thomas Jefferson](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) broke with the Federalists out of opposition to Hamilton's plans.   
  
Hamilton led the Federalist Party and was the most influential Federalist thinker. Arrogant, elitist, and brilliant, he was chosen by Washington to be the first secretary of the treasury and quickly became a dominant figure in Washington's administration. He devised a series of bold plans to remedy the financial trouble that the republic had inherited from the [American Revolution](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) and the resulting economic depression of the 1780s.   
  
Hamilton's plan to set the nation on a course of prosperity consisted of three proposals. First, he proposed that [Congress](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) "fund" the large national debt by redeeming war bonds and securities at face value and assuming payment of the state debts. Second, he proposed the charter of a national bank that would handle government funds and issue a uniform currency. Third, Hamilton argued for high protective tariffs to help pay for the debt funding schemes and promote domestic manufacturing.   
  
Jefferson and Madison led the opposition to Hamilton's proposals. Because the government securities had depreciated in value since they were issued, the debt-funding plan was criticized for being designed to enrich speculators who had bought up securities at discounted prices and who stood to profit when they were paid back at face value. In a similar vein, Jefferson and Madison criticized the idea of a national bank as a dangerous concentration of moneyed power that fell outside the powers assigned to the federal government by the Constitution. As for manufacturing, the two Virginia landowners saw farming as the centerpiece of the American economy and an independent yeomanry as the backbone of the new republic.   
  
In addition to domestic economic issues, conflict arose over Washington's foreign policy as well. In 1793, the new republican government of France had gone to war with Britain, and Americans divided over which side the United States should support. The Federalists supported Britain while Jeffersonians sided with many "Democratic" and "Republican" clubs that had formed to support France and the principles of its revolution. In 1794, a Congressional proclamation of neutrality and a [treaty](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) made with Britain by Federalist [John Jay](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) greatly angered the pro-French Jeffersonians. Subsequently, a new party was formed under Jefferson called the Democratic-Republicans.   
  
The presidential election of 1796 was the first election that saw a contest between two competing parties. Federalist [John Adams](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) narrowly defeated Jefferson (running as a Democratic-Republican) for the presidency. Adams sought to continue the Federalist policies of the previous administration, but his own administration became mired by factions who disagreed on foreign policy issues.   
  
The most notorious event of Adams's tenure in office was the passage of the [Alien and Sedition Acts](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) in 1798. The legislation, which allowed for imprisonment of those deemed "alien" or "seditious" in times of war, was aimed at French nationals agitating in the United States and domestic critics of Adams' Federalist administration. Several Democratic-Republican newspaper editors were jailed under the acts. Popular backlash toward the Alien and Sedition Acts and toward Federalist high-handedness helped Jefferson win the presidency in the "Revolution of 1800." The significance of that election was the accomplishment of a peaceful transfer of power between factions. Thereafter, the Federalists would never again win the presidency, though they remained a force in national politics.   
  
The Federalists were dealt a further blow in 1804 when Hamilton was killed in a duel with Vice President [Aaron Burr](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all). No leader of comparable brilliance emerged to replace Hamilton, and the Federalists struggled to maintain party unity. The Federalists enjoyed a resurgence of popularity during the events leading up to the [War of 1812](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all). When Jefferson's [Embargo Act](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) of 1807 brought recession to the economy, the Federalists made a strong showing in the election of 1808 and an even stronger showing in 1812 after the United States declared war on Britain, but they ultimately lost both presidential elections to the Democratic-Republican candidate James Madison.   
  
Federalist opposition to the War of 1812 culminated in the [Hartford Convention](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) of 1814. At the convention, delegates from several New England states where Federalism was strongest met to discuss ways to bolster Federalist power at the national level in return for support of the war. Proposals that New England secede from the Union were heard but voted down. When the war ended in 1815, many remembered that the Federalists had discussed disunion, and such a stain was enough to ensure a dive in popularity. In the election of 1816, the Federalists fielded a candidate for president for the last time.   
  
Although for much of their existence the Federalists were a minority party, their influence far outreached their success in officeholding. Most of Hamilton's economic plans were enacted and were largely successful in controlling the national debt, raising revenue, and stabilizing the U.S. economy. In addition, key Federalist appointments to various offices had important consequences. The most notable example can be found in Adams' appointment of [John Marshall](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) as [chief justice](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253458&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) of the Supreme Court—a position that Marshall held until his death in 1835. In decision after decision, Marshall vindicated the Federalists' nationalist vision of the supremacy of the federal government over the states. Marshall gave the Supreme Court final review over federal law instead of the states, as Madison and Jefferson had argued, and linked federal activism with the promotion of national commerce

*The Whig Party/Republican Party*:   
[Display enlarged image with caption.](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?searchtext=political+parties&type=simple&option=all&entryid=290953&issublink=true&fromsearch=false)The Whig Party, formed in 1834 and lasting until 1854, was the major political party opposing the [Democratic Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) in the [antebellum](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) era. The Whigs inherited the [Federalist Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) belief in a strong federal government and adopted many Federalist and National Republican policy ideas, including federal funding for internal improvements (building roads, canals, bridges; improving harbors), a central bank, and high tariffs to protect the growth of manufacturing enterprises.   
  
The Whig Party emerged in the early 1830s to oppose President [Andrew Jackson's](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) domestic policies, mainly his veto of the Maysville Road Bill in 1830, which would have granted money for internal improvements, and his opposition to the [Second Bank of the United States](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all). Jackson's veto of the recharter for the bank in 1832 angered many leading members of [Congress](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) who thought that a strong central bank was necessary to ensure national economic prosperity. The conflict became known as the Bank War, and Jackson delivered his veto with the claim that the bank "is trying to kill me, but I will kill it!" Finally, Jackson outraged many when he ignored an 1832 [U.S. Supreme Court](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) decision that outlawed white encroachment on [Cherokee](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) lands in Georgia. Upon learning of the Supreme Court decision, Jackson supposedly remarked, "[John Marshall](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) [[chief justice](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) of the Supreme Court] has made his decision, now let him enforce it." Jackson knew that enforcing the decision would require the use of the army, which he alone commanded, and as he refused to use the army to protect the Cherokees, the Supreme Court decision was rendered meaningless.   
  
Such activities were the last straw for Jackson's angry opponents, who dubbed him "King Andrew," suggesting that he was a tyrannical enemy of democratic government. When Jackson's opponents, led by [Henry Clay](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) and [Daniel Webster](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all), organized a party to fight Jackson, they took the name "Whigs" from the opposition party in England that had sought to limit the power of King [George III](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) in the 18th century.   
  
Initially, the Whigs were too disorganized to present much of a challenge to the popular Democratic Party, whose candidate, [Martin Van Buren](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all), easily won the presidential election of 1836 as Jackson's successor. In 1840, however, the Whig Party mounted an effective campaign for the presidency. The Whigs pioneered the modern campaign technique of image manipulation when they portrayed their candidate [William Henry Harrison](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all), who was elderly and ailing, as a hardy backwoodsman who drank "hard cider" and lived in a "log cabin." It helped too that Van Buren's popularity had been greatly diminished when a financial panic in 1837 triggered a nationwide economic depression, the effects of which were still being felt in 1840. Whig propagandists called Van Buren "Martin Van Ruin" and attacked him ceaselessly in partisan newspapers. With vice presidential candidate [John Tyler](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all), the Whigs ran Harrison on the slogan "Tippecanoe and Tyler too" (to commemorate Harrison's victory over Native Americans at the [Battle of Tippecanoe](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) in 1812) and resoundingly defeated Van Buren in the election.   
  
In the 1840s, the issue of expansion into the Western territories dominated national politics and threatened to divide the Whig Party into Northern antislavery and Southern proslavery factions. Just as Whigs and Democrats disagreed over such economic issues as tariffs and the role of the government in fostering economic growth, so did they disagree over the issues of slavery and Western settlement. On the whole, Whigs tended to be more sympathetic toward African Americans and Native Americans and less enthusiastic about expansion than were the Democrats. Both parties, however, were beset by divisions over these issues, and in the 1840s, such divisions threatened to upset the cross-sectional alliances of both parties. The Whigs fared worse from the growing sectional tension than the Democrats, however.

In the wake of the Whigs' collapse, a new major party arose—the [Republican Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253625&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all)—that became the vessel of Whig ideas and policies as many former Whigs joined its ranks.

*The Democratic-Republican Party:* The Democratic-Republicans (sometimes referred to as "Jeffersonian Republicans") organized in the 1790s and became the first opposition party in the United States after the country secured its independence from Great Britain. Following the ideas of [Thomas Jefferson](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) and [James Madison](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all), the Democratic-Republicans were opposed to a strong central government and a central bank and supported strict construction of the [Constitution](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) and the predominance of agriculture in the economy.   
  
The Democratic-Republicans were formed largely in opposition to the policies of [Alexander Hamilton](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) in the 1790s. As the first secretary of the treasury, Hamilton acted aggressively to deal with the new republic's financial troubles with proposals to fund the national debt, create a central banking system and uniform currency, and promote manufacturing with a high protective tariff. Jefferson opposed these policies, objecting to the concentration of power in the hands of bankers and currency speculators. Jefferson also believed that an economy dominated by small farmers, not manufacturers, would best preserve republican values.   
  
In 1793, Jefferson resigned as secretary of state at the outset of Washington's second term and began organizing opposition to Hamilton's policies. Drawing support from members of "Democratic" and "Republican" clubs that had formed to support the French Revolution, Jefferson continued to criticize the Washington administration's domestic and foreign policies and narrowly missed being elected president over Federalist [John Adams](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) in 1796 as the candidate for a new party called the "Democratic-Republicans." As their name implied, the party claimed to represent the values for which the [American Revolution](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) had been fought, while Federalists were portrayed as a party of "aristocrats" attempting to rule according to monarchical principles.   
  
Under Adams, the Federalists passed the [Alien and Sedition Acts](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) in 1798. The acts allowed for the deportation of foreigners and the imprisonment of persons deemed hostile to the government. Under these laws, several Jeffersonian editors and supporters were jailed. Jefferson and Madison responded with the [Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions (1798)](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all), which argued that individual states had the right to nullify acts of the federal government if deemed unconstitutional by the states.   
  
In 1800, Jefferson was elected president after a bitter political campaign against Adams. For the first time, power was transferred peacefully from one faction to another. The "Revolution of 1800," as the election was sometimes called, set an example for future elections. The Federalists continued to be a political force, but after 1796, they never won another presidential election. Instead, the election of Jefferson inaugurated what became known as the "Virginia Dynasty," meaning the election of Virginians to the presidency who were basically Jeffersonian in outlook (Jefferson, 1800-1808; Madison, 1808-1816; [James Monroe](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all), 1816-1824).   
  
After the [War of 1812](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all), the Federalists declined as a viable political force outside of New England, and in 1816, they fielded their last presidential candidate. No opposition party emerged to take the Federalists' place. Accordingly, the two-term presidency of Monroe (1816-1825) became known as the "Era of Good Feelings" for its lack of serious political contention between parties. This mask of unity, however, covered divisions within the Democratic-Republican Party that would eventually result in the exodus of several factions in the 1820s.   
  
Although numerous small groups splintered from the Democratic-Republicans, the main party divided into two factions. One faction was deemed "Hamiltonian" for its nationalistic economic policies; this group coalesced around the leadership of such young statesmen as [John Quincy Adams](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all), [Henry Clay](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all), and [John C. Calhoun](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) and came to be known as National Republicans. In 1824, John Quincy Adams ran for the presidency on the National Republican ticket and won. Eventually, the National Republicans would evolve into the [Whig Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all). The other faction formed around [Andrew Jackson](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?entryid=253429&issublink=true&searchtext=political%20parties&type=simple&option=all) and quickly became known as Jacksonian Democrats, or simply Democrats. Jackson adhered more closely to the principles of Jefferson and Madison, advocating a strict construction of the Constitution and limited federal powers.

*Democratic Party:* The Democratic Party evolved out of the [Democratic-Republican Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all) of the early 19th century. Throughout much of the 19th century, the Democratic Party advocated for a limited role for the federal government in the nation's affairs and fought against centralization. The core of its membership was composed of farmers, immigrants, and white Southerners. The Democratic Party has been one of the principal parties of the two-party system since the late 1820s.   
  
Calling upon the political heritage of [Thomas Jefferson](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all) and [James Madison](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all), [Andrew Jackson](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all) became the first leader of the Democratic Party following his election to presidency in 1828. Just prior to Jackson's presidency, new methods of organization and party discipline were pioneered by [Martin Van Buren](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all) and his "Bucktail" faction of Democrats in the state of New York. Van Buren championed firm party discipline, which meant rewarding loyal followers of the party with appointive offices and punishing party members who deviated from party doctrine. Such measures represented a change from the preceding era of party politics, where leaders on both sides often disdained to appoint their followers for fear of being tainted as overly partisan.   
  
Employing these new tactics, Van Buren masterminded Jackson's election in 1828. Van Buren also helped to pioneer a style of campaigning that emphasized personality and symbolism and shied away from substantive issues of debate. Jackson won handily using such tactics and consolidated Democratic national power with his appointments and widespread use of the [spoils system](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all).   
  
Jackson's presidency has traditionally been called the "Era of the Common Man," and Jacksonian democracy has become synonymous with greater democratization in politics and social life. Whether Jackson was the cause or the beneficiary of such changes is debatable, but there can be no doubt that his era reflected the result of two decades of expanding the suffrage, economic change, and Western expansion. Changes in transportation and communication coupled with population growth had speeded Western settlement and helped to erode many of the older status distinctions and customs of deference between people of unequal wealth, elevating the common man to an equal position with the elite. In imitation of Jackson, politicians began to paint themselves as champions of the common man and often accused their political opponents of catering to the interests of the elite. Jackson and the newly constituted Democratic Party embraced this rough and tumble democratic culture.   
  
During his two terms as president, Jackson waged a battle to define clearly the limits of the federal government, but to make the federal government supreme within those limits. In other words, he opposed efforts to expand the federal government's power into new areas, such as banking, regulating the economy, and constructing internal improvements (such as roads and canals). However, he demanded that the federal government's will was supreme within its established sphere of power, as evidenced in his strong pro-Union stance during the [nullification crisis](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all) and his insistence that the federal government could remove Native Americans from their land under the [Indian Removal Act (1830)](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all). Jackson completed his term in 1836 and was succeeded by Van Buren, who held office for a single term.   
  
After 1840, the issue of slavery and territorial expansion divided both parties, although with its strong base of Southern slaveholders, the Democratic Party remained intact longer than the [Whig Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all), which had disintegrated by the mid-1850s. Though the Democrats survived as a party, the issues of slavery, expansion, and immigration wreaked havoc on party unity, with many defections among its ranks to the antislavery "Barnburner" faction in New York, the anti-immigrant [Know-Nothing Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all), and the antislavery [Republican Party](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all). The most influential Democrat of the 1850s was Senator [Stephen A. Douglas](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all) of Illinois, popularly known as the "Little Giant" for his enormous influence and small physical stature. The Democrats controlled the presidency for much of the 1840s and 1850s, with [James K. Polk](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all) serving a single term from 1844 to 1848, [Franklin Pierce](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all) serving a single term from 1852 to 1856, and [James Buchanan](http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display.aspx?categoryid=23&entryid=253428&searchtext=democratic+party&type=simple&option=all) serving a single term from 1856 to 1860.

***http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?articleId=219534***

(12-22) The framers of the [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..co205400.a)Constitution of the United States made no provision in the governmental structure for the functioning of political parties because they believed that parties were a source of corruption and an impediment to the freedom of people to judge issues on their merits. [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..ma010600.a)James Madison argued in his “Federalist Paper #10” against a system in which “factions” (his word for parties) might be able to seize control of the government (*see* [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..fe017200.a)Federalist, The). [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..wa013600.a)George Washington, in accordance with the thinking of his fellow Founding Fathers, included in his cabinet men of diverse political philosophies and policies.

**Federalist and Democratic-Republican Parties.**

Within a short time informal parties did develop, even though their adherents still insisted they disapproved of parties as a permanent feature in American politics. One faction, commonly identified with Secretary of the Treasury [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..ha013500.a)Alexander Hamilton and Vice-President [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..ad021800.a)John Adams, became known as the [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..fe017300.a)Federalist party. Federalists favored an active federal government, a Treasury that played a vital role in the nation's economic life, and a pro-British foreign policy. It drew especially strong support from merchants, manufacturers, and residents of New England. The other faction, whose central figures were Secretary of State [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..je014100.a)Thomas Jefferson and fellow Virginian James Madison, became known as the Republican or [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..de035500.a)Democratic-Republican party (this party should not be confused with the modern Republican party; see below). The Jeffersonian Republicans advocated a limited federal government, little government interference in economic affairs, and a pro-French foreign policy. They were particularly popular with debt-ridden farmers, artisans, and southerners.

The structure of government in the U.S. was conducive to the formation of political parties. The carefully elaborated system of checks and balances, established by the Constitution, makes executive and legislative cooperation necessary in the development of policy. Further, the division of legislative powers between the federal and state governments, as provided in the Constitution, makes it necessary for advocates of such policies as the regulation of commerce to seek representation or strength in both the federal and state legislatures. As these ends were too complex and difficult to achieve by impermanent groupings, the formation of permanent political organizations was inevitable.

The Jeffersonian Republicans held power for 28 years following the inauguration of President Jefferson in 1801. During this period, the Federalist party became increasingly unpopular. It ceased functioning on the national level after the [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..wa009400.a)War of 1812, leaving the Republican party as the only national political organization.

**New Political Alignments.**

Far-reaching changes in the U.S. economy and social structure resulted in the gradual formation of new political alignments within a one-party system. The principal changes behind these developments were: (1) the expansion of the country westward, with an accompanying development of a large class of pioneer farmers, whose frontier communities represented a type of democratic society never before seen in any country; (2) the agricultural revolution in the southern states, following both the invention of the cotton gin by [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..wh044700.a)Eli Whitney and the development of textile machinery, which resulted in the dynamic growth of the slave system producing cotton; and (3) a considerable growth in the wealth and influence of manufacturers, merchants, bondholders, and land speculators of the northern states. The ideas of limited government that became known as Jeffersonian democracy appealed strongly to the sectional and class interests of the western frontier and the South, and also to the growing class of urban workers. The policies once advocated by the defunct Federalist party, however, were still popular with the minority of Americans who favored a more active economic role for the federal government.

**Revived Two-Party System.**

The second two-party system developed gradually as Republicans began quarreling over several issues. The followers of [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..cl154000.a)Henry Clay and [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..ad021900.a)John Quincy Adams, who asserted that the federal government should actively promote economic development, became known as National Republicans. Their opponents, who eventually united behind the presidential candidacy of [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..ja001600.a)Andrew Jackson, were first known as Democratic-Republicans and by 1828 as the [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..de035400.a)Democratic party.

During Jackson's tenure as president, his controversial policies and contentious personality prevented any reconciliation with the National Republicans. By the middle of Jackson's second term, his opponents began to call themselves the [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..wh039800.a)Whig party. Leaders of the party included [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..we024400.a)Daniel Webster and Henry Clay.

During the 1830s the Locofocos, a radical splinter group of the Democratic party in New York City, opposed monopolies and private bankers. The name was derived from a popular brand of matches used by the group to continue a crucial meeting in 1835, at which probank opponents turned off the gas. Later known as the Equal Rights party, the Locofocos were conciliated and reabsorbed into the Democratic party following the election of [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..va006000.a)Martin Van Buren in 1836.

The Democrats controlled the national government for most of the years between 1828 and 1860, although they lost two presidential elections to Whig military heroes. After 1840 the Democratic party became more and more the mouthpiece of the slaveholders. Northern Democratic leaders were often called “doughfaces,” or northern men with southern principles, by opponents. Opposed to the Democrats were the Whigs and a variety of minor parties, such as the Liberty party, the political arm of the [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..ab007600.a)abolitionists, and the [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..fr082400.a)Free-Soil party.

In 1854 the party system dominated by Whigs and Democrats collapsed due to the controversy sparked by the [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..ka007700.a)Kansas-Nebraska Act, which made it possible to establish slavery in western territories, where it had previously been banned. This act outraged northerners and convinced many Democrats and Whigs in that region to abandon their parties. Many of these voters initially joined the Know-Nothing party, an anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant organization whose antislavery reputation in the North helped it attract more than 1 million members (*see* [http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/icons/info.gif](http://www.history.com/encyclopedia/article.jsp?link=FWNE.fw..kn045800.a)Know-Nothings).

[***http://www.america.gov/st/elections08-english/2007/September/20070904164809ndyblehs0.9354975.html***](http://www.america.gov/st/elections08-english/2007/September/20070904164809ndyblehs0.9354975.html)

(12-22) When most people around the world think of elephants and donkeys, they simply picture jungle and farm animals.  In the United States, however, these two beasts of burden bring to mind the country’s two major political parties.

Since the middle of the 19th century, the elephant has been the symbol of the Republican Party, President Bush’s party, which also is known as the GOP (Grand Old Party).  The donkey symbolizes the Democratic Party, which currently is the majority party in the U.S. Congress.

These are the two parties that dominate U.S. politics.  Dozens of smaller parties exist, but their primary influence now occurs when they divert key votes from one of the major parties’ candidates during elections.

The Democrats date back to 1800 and the election of Thomas Jefferson as the United States’ third president.  The nation’s first two presidents were members of the now-defunct Federalist Party.  Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president, was the first Republican elected to the office.

At the founding of the United States, the Constitution gave no role to political parties.  When voting was restricted to an elite group of male property owners in the early days of the republic, there was little need to establish broad-based political organizations.  But as the nation grew and more citizens gained the right to vote, the need arose to mobilize voters.  Political parties filled that role, becoming a firmly established part of the political landscape.

The current Democratic Party originally was known as the Republicans, then took the name Democratic-Republicans and in the 1830s became the Democrats. Around the same time, opposition forces formed the Whig Party, which elected several presidents before disbanding.  In the 1850s, core members of the Whigs joined others in opposition to the Democrats to form the current Republican Party.